

Numbers 30 - Thursday, February 17th, 2011

30:1 Then Moses spoke to the heads of the tribes concerning the children of Israel, saying, "This is the thing which the LORD has commanded: 2 If a man makes a vow to the LORD, or swears an oath to bind himself by some agreement, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.

- After reiterating the offerings and feasts the Lord now rounds a corner and addresses the issue of vows, oaths, and keeping ones word.
- It seems that God is wanting to prepare them for entering the Promise-Land as they will soon do by dealing with some final matters.
- At first glance, these matters may seem sort of nebulous, but God knows how important this will be once they arrive, first in Jericho.

- With the battles that lie ahead and the difficulties they'll face, this established order with the Lord and with one another will become vital.
- They'll need the blessing of the Lord in their offerings during the feasts, and they'll need integrity in their dealings with one another.
- The importance of these can't be underestimated by virtue of what could happen if there's enmity with God and conflict with each other.

- Perhaps this is a good time to take a quick look at the issue of making vows, and having integrity. First, to the matter of making vows.
- Some have argued that we should not make vows today in the New Covenant, because of what Jesus said in Matthews Gospel.

Matthew 5:33-37 33 "Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord.' 34 But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; 35 or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. 36 And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. 37 Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

- Then, James, the half brother of Jesus, sort of echo's the same thing in his epistle found in the book of James chapter five verse twelve.

James 5:12 Above all, my brothers, do not swear-not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. Let your "Yes" be yes, and your "No," no, or you will be condemned.

- I believe that both of these passages are saying is that if we have integrity, our yes will be good enough and we won't have make oaths.
- Now, the question becomes, what about other passages in scripture that seem to indicate that there does come a time to make a vow.

Ecclesiastes 5:4-5 4 When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfill your vow. 5 It is better not to vow than to make a vow and not fulfill it.

Leviticus 23:38 These offerings are in addition ...to your gifts and whatever you have vowed and all the freewill offerings you give to the LORD.

Psalms 56:12-13 12 I am under vows to you, O God; I will present my thank offerings to you. 13 For you have delivered me from death and my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before God in the light of life.

- The common denominator in all of these is, there's a notable distinction between swearing an oath to man and making a vow to God.
- It is an absolute must that we keep our word and have integrity in our dealings with others, but it's better to not make a vow to God.
- Here in this chapter, the Lord is sort of laying down some rules so as to give the Israelites a track to run on, to avoid future conflicts.

3 "Or if a woman makes a vow to the LORD, and binds herself by some agreement while in her father's house in her youth,⁴ and her father hears her vow and the agreement by which she has bound herself, and her father holds his peace, then all her vows shall stand, and every agreement with which she has bound herself shall stand.⁵ But if her father overrules her on the day that he hears, then none of her vows nor her agreements by which she has bound herself shall stand; and the LORD will release her, because her father overruled her.

- Now, as we get into the specifics of these vows, the Lord is going to address certain instances where there are exceptions to the rules.
- As an example a father could overrule her daughter in the event that she made a rash or foolish vow that he was not in agreement with.
- I find it interesting that if the father is silent upon hearing his daughters vow, he in effect is saying that he is in agreement with her vow.

- This is a double-edged sword in the sense that when we remain silent in a certain matter, our silence can imply that we are complicit.
- In other words, if we don't say anything about something, it can be interpreted as agreeing with everything because we said nothing.
- Then they'll say; "well you didn't say anything about it, and I thought that it was ok because if it wasn't you would have said something."

6 "If indeed she takes a husband, while bound by her vows or by a rash utterance from her lips by which she bound herself,⁷ and her husband hears it, and makes no response to her on the day that he hears, then her vows shall stand, and her agreements by which she bound herself shall stand.⁸ But if her husband overrules her on the day that he hears it, he shall make void her vow which she took and what she uttered with her lips, by which she bound herself, and the LORD will release her.

- The Lord goes from a man's daughter to a man's wife, and basically lays down the same rule, and also the same exception to that rule.
- It's important to note that in so doing, the Lord is establishing the order of headship in the home with a God-given authority to the man.
- Now I am keenly aware that saying that, that way, may fuel further conflict as it relates to the man being the spiritual leader in the home.

- Since I just opened up this can of worms, as it were, perhaps I would do well to expand further on this before we move on to verse nine.
- While I most certainly don't have the corner on being a spiritual leader in the home, I am most certainly learning a thing or two about it.
- Much of what I am learning, I've learned the hard way and have the scars to prove it. Be that as it may, I'll say this is in a simple way.

- The God-given authority in the home comes packaged with a profound and almost sacred trust to be found faithful in the responsibility.
- When we take our responsibility seriously and lead with integrity then our wives won't be forced to take the lead and usurp our authority.

"The Christian leader who is married must demonstrate his ability to rule his home in a godly way – [as the Apostle Paul wrote] 'one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity.' Is it not failure in this realm that has caused many ministers and missionaries to fall short of the highest in their leadership? ... The clear implication is that, while caring for the interests of the church or other spiritual activity, the leader will not neglect the family, which is his personal and primary responsibility. In the economy of God, the discharge of one God-given duty or responsibility will never involve the neglect of another. There is time for the full discharge of every legitimate duty. Paul implies that the ability of a man to exercise spiritual authority over others is evidenced by his ability to exercise a wise and loving discipline in his own home. Leadership has often been forfeited through failure in that realm."

J. Oswald Sanders, "Spiritual Leadership."

9 "Also any vow of a widow or a divorced woman, by which she has bound herself, shall stand against her.

- Lest you think this seems unnecessarily harsh, consider how the widow or divorced woman is all alone without any covering over her.
- This goes back to what we just talked about related to the spiritual leadership in the home. The man becomes the covering in his home.

10 "If she vowed in her husband's house, or bound herself by an agreement with an oath,¹¹ and her husband heard it, and made no response to her and did not overrule her, then all her vows shall stand, and every agreement by which she bound herself shall stand.

- Here again, we see the silence on the part of the husband towards his wife's vow as an agreement that he will not overrule her.

12 But if her husband truly made them void on the day he heard them, then whatever proceeded from her lips concerning her vows or concerning the agreement binding her, it shall not stand; her husband has made them void, and the LORD will release her.¹³ Every vow and every binding oath to afflict her soul, her husband may confirm it, or her husband may make it void.¹⁴ Now if her husband makes no response whatever to her from day to day, then he confirms all her vows or all the agreements that bind her; he confirms them, because he made no response to her on the day that he heard them.

- Here, the Lord is saying that if the husband heard his wife make a vow and didn't step in and say or do something, the vow stood as is.
- Once again, you can't help but notice the amount of responsibility and even accountability the Lord places on the husband for his wife.
- We'll see this even more so in the next verse. Suffice it to say, God takes the authority that he has given to the husband, very seriously.

15 But if he does make them void after he has heard them, then he shall bear her guilt."

- So, in the event that the husband changes his mind about his wife's vow and wants to void it, he can only do it by taking it upon himself.
- One commentator summed it up best this way; "He shall bear her iniquity means he will suffer for the broken vow as though it were his."

16 These are the statutes which the LORD commanded Moses, between a man and his wife, and between a father and his daughter in her youth in her father's house.

- Chapter 30 ends with God basically saying these are the statutes to hold men to their word, especially between them and their wives.
- The reason I emphasize the statutes between a man and his wife as it relates to vows and oaths, is because of its application to us.
- It is two-fold, in that there is both a prophetic picture with the information, and practical lessons we can learn by way of application.

THE PASSAGE SAYS	THE PROBLEM IS
Verses 1-2: If a man makes an oath he must not break it	We don't keep our word
Verses 3-5: The father can overrule the daughters obligations	We make foolish commitments
Verses 6-8: The husband can overrule the wife's rash decision	We are too quick to make a vow
Verses 9-11: The vow stands for one with no husband or made by herself	We never got wise and godly counsel
Verses 12-16: The husband bears the responsibility for the oath	We won't take responsibility

- In addition to the practical application, we are given prophetic information which paint a picture of and point to salvation in Jesus Christ.

INFORMATION		SALVATION
Verse 1	Man or Husband	Jesus Christ
Verse 2	Vow, Oath, Pledge, or Obligation	Debt, Wages of Sin
Verse 3	Young or Married Women	Born Again Believers
Verse 5	Father	God the Father
Verse 8	Nullify or Released	Forgiven and Saved
Verse 9	Widowed or Divorced	Not Forgiven and Saved